California Ocean Protection Council
Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan

Discussion Draft for March Public Workshops

Notation: Intent of the Document*

This draft document is intended to be used to help guide the discussions at the Ocean Protection Council (OPC) strategic plan workshops in Los Angeles on March 22 and in Sausalito on March 23. This document provides an overview of the issues the staff is considering for inclusion in the Draft Five-Year Strategic Plan to be presented at the OPC's April 20 meeting in Sacramento.

This document summarizes the legislative requirements for the OPC pursuant to the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA), and it outlines draft approaches for addressing these mandates. The intent of this document is to identify actions that would help the OPC meet COPA's mandate during the next five years.

***** This document is a draft for discussion purposes and should not be quoted or cited.

I. MISSION, STATUTORY AUTHORITY, AND STAFFING

Mission

The mission of the California Ocean Protection Council (OPC) is:

To improve the protection, management, and restoration of California's ocean and coastal ecosystems for their intrinsic value and for the benefit of current and future generations.

For the purposes of the OPC and its activities, the ocean and coastal ecosystem encompasses the entire environment from the top of the watershed to the deep ocean.

Statutory Authority

Legislative Mandate. Governor Schwarzenegger, in accordance with Action 2 of his Ocean Action Plan, created the OPC in 2004 by signing the California Ocean Protection Act (COPA) into law. COPA created the OPC as a high-level coordinating body with several distinct charges, which include:

- Coordinate activities of state agencies to improve the effectiveness of state efforts to protect ocean and coastal resources.
- Establish policies to coordinate the collection and sharing of scientific data related to coast and ocean resources.
- Identify and recommend to the Legislature changes in law needed to achieve the goals of COPA.
- Identify changes in federal law and policy necessary to achieve the goals of COPA.
- Recommend to the Governor and Legislature actions the state should take to encourage changes in federal law and policy.

Guiding Principles. COPA includes guiding principles that California state agencies must follow and that the OPC is to promote. Many of the principles identified in COPA are the direct result of findings of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, the Pew Oceans Commission, and Governor Schwarzenegger's Ocean Action Plan. In summary these principles include:

- Recognizing the interconnectedness of the land and the sea, supporting sustainable uses of the coast, and ensuring that ecosystem health is a management priority.
- Improving the protection, conservation, restoration, and management of coastal and ocean ecosystems through enhanced scientific understanding, including monitoring and data gathering.
- Setting priorities for action while taking into account the precautionary principle that emphasizes the priority for resource protection.
- Identifying the most effective and efficient use of public funds by identifying gaps in management and by identifying new and innovative processes for achieving success.

- Making aesthetic, educational, and recreational uses of the coast and ocean a priority.

- Involving the public in all aspects of the OPC process, through public OPC meetings, workshops, public conferences, or other symposia.

OPC Membership and Staff

The OPC consists of the Secretaries for the Resources Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency, the chair of the State Lands Commission, and two nonvoting members, one appointed by the Senate and one appointed by the Assembly. Under the direction of the Secretary for Resources, who chairs the OPC, the Executive Officer for the State Coastal Conservancy serves as the Secretary to the OPC, and the staff of the State Coastal Conservancy administers its affairs.

The OPC will hire an Executive Policy Officer to be the staff lead in recommending policy actions to the OPC. The Executive Policy Officer will also be the primary liaison between the OPC and all levels of government, industry, academia, and the NGO community.

The OPC is partnering with the California Ocean Science Trust (CalOST) to hire a CalOST Executive Director who will also serve as the Science Advisor to the OPC. The Science Advisor will work with the OPC to create a standing Science Advisory Committee to develop scientific recommendations on issues identified by the OPC.

II. TOOLS TO IMPLEMENT COPA: STRUCTURE FOR OPC ACTIONS

The OPC will implement the mandates of COPA by using the tools outlined in this section. Section III of this plan identifies potential actions to which these tools will be applied over a five year period. In accordance with COPA, the potential actions identified in Section III will be focused on issues of statewide concern and on innovative approaches to situations where multiple agencies and/or overlapping jurisdictions create inefficiencies in ocean and coastal protection.

A. COORDINATION, COLLABORATION, AND INTEGRATION: MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK BETTER

The OPC will identify high-priority ocean and coastal management issues involving multiple agencies and jurisdictions and work to craft the most efficient and effective approaches to address them. Section III of this plan identifies potential actions that the OPC will address. Implementation of this plan will require identifying the top priorities for immediate action. The key components for strategic plan implementation include:

- **Create a State Agency Steering Committee.** To ensure that all concerns raised by the OPC and other stakeholders are addressed, a State Agency Steering Committee, composed of representatives of state departments with ocean and coastal responsibilities, will be established to focus on implementation of this plan. The steps are:

    - Prioritize actions identified in Section III of this plan.
    - Identify strategies to improve efforts to address the top priorities.
    - Inventory and review current laws to determine if they adequately address the top priorities or whether additional legislative action may be necessary.
    - Develop a plan for how new policy or cross-cutting budget approaches can improve efforts to address top priorities.
    - Determine the most effective way to ensure the ongoing involvement of interested stakeholders in this process.

- **Seek Federal Government Support for California's Priorities**. California has called for the implementation of the major recommendations of the U.S. and Pew Ocean Commissions. The OPC will continue to advocate for federal support for California initiatives, and for the implementation of key recommendations from both the U.S. and the Pew Ocean Commissions. The focus of this engagement will be on issues, such as:

    - Maintaining the moratorium on offshore oil and gas leasing.
    - Supporting California's non-point source pollution program.
    - Calling for the ratification of the Law of the Sea Treaty.
    - Supporting California's ocean observing systems.

  - Re-authorizing a strong Coastal Zone Management Act.

- **Host California and the World Ocean Conference 2006 (CWO '06)**. To ensure that the entire ocean community is involved in the implementation of the strategic plan, the OPC is sponsoring CWO '06 to be held September 17-20 in Long Beach, California.

B. IMPROVING ACCESS TO SCIENCE

The OPC will implement the recommendations in the recently adopted California Ocean and Coastal Information, Research, and Outreach (IRO) Strategy to ensure the necessary science to address these issues is accessible to managers and policy makers. The IRO Strategy emphasizes the importance of synthesizing existing science in addition to seeking funds for new research. The steps in implementing and updating the IRO Strategy are:

- **Create a Science Advisory Committee.** To ensure that the best available science is applied to OPC policy decisions, a Science Advisory Committee composed of leading scientists in major ocean and coastal disciplines will be established.

- **Make research part of the funding strategy.** The OPC has committed $1 million to a research initiative focused on ecosystem based management and has funded other projects with research and monitoring components. The OPC will continue this commitment to ocean and coastal research.

- **Support Cross-cutting Information Needs.** To ensure that the necessary information is collected and available for ocean management, essential cross-cutting programs will be supported by the OPC. The key steps are:

  - Support California's ocean observing systems through new funding and fostering connections between the regional associations to create an integrated system.
  - Develop a plan to complete high-resolution mapping of state waters and work with federal government to map key areas of federal waters.
  - Support the development of biological and socio-economic monitoring programs.
  - Encourage the compilation and synthesis of existing information at data integration centers.

C. Improving Education and Outreach

To ensure that all Californians are involved in ocean and coastal protection, the OPC will implement the outreach actions identified in the Information, Research, and Outreach Strategy. The actions are:

- Incorporate ocean and coastal science into public education by working in cooperation with the CalEPA Education and the Environment Initiative and other education efforts.
- Improve access to information on California's ocean and coastal efforts by sponsoring a web site that provides all ocean and coastal information in one place and serves as a directory to all California's ocean programs.
- Launch the ocean stewardship media campaign being developed by the Ocean Communicators Alliance.
- Enhance state coordination and support of formal and informal education programs.

D. Developing a Funding Strategy

The OPC will seek to ensure that sufficient funding is available to complete key goals and objectives identified in this plan. The steps to meet these funding goals are:

- Conduct an analysis of current state and federal investment in ocean and coastal issues to determine if there are ways to redeploy or share resources and create other efficiencies.
- Complete the study of potential state and federal funding sources, currently funded by the OPC.
- Propose a range of new funding options for consideration by the Governor, Legislature, federal government, and public/private partners.

III. POTENTIAL PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

The following is an initial assessment of potential actions that the OPC may take in implementing COPA during the next five years. As described in Section II of this plan, a State Agency Steering Committee will be established to determine the top priorities for immediate OPC action. The overarching focus will be on actions that address issues of statewide concern and on new and innovative approaches to issues where currently multiple agencies and/or overlapping jurisdictions create inefficiencies. Particular emphasis will be given to actions that employ the "Tools to Implement COPA" identified in Section II: Coordination, Collaboration, and Integration- Making Government Work Better; Improving Access To Science; Improving Education and Outreach; and Developing a Funding Strategy.

These potential priorities for action were developed by OPC staff that compiled recommendations from stakeholders received through interviews, focus groups, and written comment. The OPC staff is currently in the process of determining what level of action or fiscal support might be required to address these issues.

A. OCEAN RESOURCES: FISHERIES, HABITATS, AND SPECIES

California relies on ocean resources for both ecosystem services and commercial and recreational opportunities. Yet, many of these resources are currently exploited. Marine ecosystems are inherently complex, and a holistic approach is therefore needed to preserve each essential component. Maintaining these essential functions can be achieved through several actions including creating, monitoring, and enforcing marine protected areas; preventing and eradicating marine invasive species; and encouraging sustainable fisheries. In addition, complex ocean resource problems require better scientific understanding of the current functioning of marine and estuarine ecosystems. Improved or increased data acquisition, analysis, and monitoring provide critical baselines for future changes in marine and estuarine ecosystems, as well as metrics to measure future success or failure.

PROTECT VALUABLE MARINE HABITATS AND SPECIES

1. Implement the Marine Life Protection Act (MLPA) by extending the existing process to other regions.

- Designate a statewide system of marine protected areas (MPAs).
- Develop and implement effective monitoring protocols to evaluate established MPAs.
- Fund and implement the necessary enforcement for California's MPA network.
- Implement an adaptive management and enforcement program for MPAs, including coordination on a regional and federal basis.

2. Create, test, and implement ecosystem-based management approaches.

- Develop and implement three or more pilot projects (such as the Morro Bay Ecosystem Based Management Project) to investigate the practicality and efficacy of ecosystem-based management of coastal and ocean resources.
- Establish a team of scientists and managers to determine what ecosystem-based management approaches are feasible, appropriate, and effective.

3. Protect and restore populations of threatened and endangered marine and estuarine species.

- Create multi-agency, species-specific task forces to focus on critical species, while implementing an ecosystem-based management approach.
- Develop and implement three or more species-specific wildlife restoration projects to determine the causes of population decline and, if necessary, identify specific areas or methods for habitat conservation projects to boost population growth. Use the "Department of Fish and Game Wildlife Action Plan for the Marine Region" and their "Wildlife Species Matrix" as guides. Examples of potential candidates for such an approach include the southern sea otter, abalone, and the common murre.

4. Reduce the harmful effects of invasive species on native populations and habitats.

- Complete the statewide Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Management Plan by November 2006.
- Implement the key management actions identified in the AIS Management Plan for coastal and estuarine waters. These management actions include prevention; monitoring and early detection; response, eradication and control; restoration; education and outreach; coordination and collaboration; and policy and research.
- Improve the collection of data on existing and emerging marine invasive species and implement science-based eradication and management strategies.
- Organize, maintain, and empower a state rapid response task force to quickly address or eradicate invasive species threats such as that posed by *Caulerpa taxifolia.*
- Complete, or make significant progress towards, eradication of problem species such as *Spartina* in San Francisco Bay and *Arundo* in Southern California.

ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES

5. Implement the Marine Life Management Act (MLMA).

- Prioritize the fisheries most in need of additional monitoring and control.
- Complete at least one stock assessment per year to support management decisions on these species of concern.

- Develop at least one Fishery Management Plan per year that takes into account larger ecosystem considerations.

6. Investigate and implement innovative economic approaches for recovering fish stocks and fisheries.

- Develop a Sustainable Fisheries Capitol Pool or similar strategy that will help promote more rational fishing effort and incentives and develop new fishing techniques that have fewer unwanted impacts such as bycatch.
- Investigate different quota systems and limited entry programs for their use in state fisheries, with consideration for the system's ability to control effort and reduce impacts to the marine environment.

7. Adequately enforce existing and new fisheries regulations.

- Increase the state "presence" on the water and at access sites by significantly increasing enforcement staff at the Department of Fish and Game and upgrading the status and pay of enforcement personnel.
- Implement new technologies for permitting, such as electronic licensing for both commercial and recreational permit holders with the Automated License Data System (ALDS).
- Implement new technologies for enforcing regulations by tracking fishing effort though a Vessel Monitoring System or Coastal Radar (CODAR) array.
- Restructure Department of Fish and Game fee system so that revenues generated from the marine region can be used for the most urgent projects within that region.

RESTORE VITAL HABITATS

8. Complete planning, design, and initial implementation of important enhancement and restoration projects, including kelp, eelgrass, and native oysters.

- Complete the San Francisco Bay Subtidal Habitat Goals Project by June 2008 and begin implementing recommendations.

9. Complete planning and begin implementation for at least 25,000 acres of coastal wetland restoration projects.

- Complete planning and begin restoring the South Bay Salt Ponds, Napa-Sonoma Marshes, Dutch Slough, Ballona Wetlands, Bel Marin Keys, Tijuana Estuary, and Ormond Beach wetlands projects, including adaptive management and monitoring as necessary.
- Complete restoration at the former Hamilton Airfield and implement adaptive management plan.

- Support the work of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project, San Francisco Bay Joint Venture, and North Coast Joint Venture.

10. Restore habitat connectivity and quality within coastal watersheds.

- Complete planning and begin removal of the high priority barriers to passage of anadromous fish as identified in the Coastal Conservancy's "Inventory of Barriers to Fish Passage in California's Coastal Watersheds."
- Complete other high priority habitat improvement projects in coastal watersheds.
- Complete removal of Matilija Dam and restoration of the Ventura River watershed.
- Complete removal of Rindge Dam and restoration of Malibu Creek Watershed.
- Complete studies on removal of dams on Klamath and Carmel Rivers to determine state roles.
- Update and refine CalFish database and website.
- Allocate sufficient state funds to secure matching federal grant funds for fishery enhancement programs.

11. Protect and provide for adequate instream flow to ensure high quality habitat in coastal streams and lagoons.

- Install and maintain stream gauges statewide to measure flow.
- Perform water balance models for key coastal watersheds to define necessary instream flow and establish inflow rates necessary to protect water quality in coastal lagoons and estuaries.

IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ESTUARINE AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS

12. Complete the installation of a California ocean observing system and maintain adequate funding for operations and improvements.

- Complete the Coastal Radar (CODAR) system and ensure that it is fully operated and maintained.
- Develop a working group to define and develop an integrated system with federal, regional and state partners.

13. Complete high-resolution mapping of California state waters, including data acquisition, interpretation, and creation of habitat maps, and work with federal government to map key areas of federal waters.

- Implement the recommendations from the December 2006 Statewide Marine Mapping Planning Workshop, and require all future mapping projects to use standards identified in the Workshop Report.
- Complete mapping of high-priority areas identified in the report.

- Develop and maintain state and federal partnerships to leverage investment in mapping projects.
- Develop and implement a system for data management and a standardized approach to creation of mapping products.

14. **Develop and implement a comprehensive state approach to acquire and manage monitoring data (including biological, physical and socioeconomic indicators). Support and expand existing ocean observation and monitoring programs such as Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans (PISCO) and Cooperative Research and Assessment of Nearshore Ecosystems (CRANE).**

B. COASTAL WATER QUALITY AND POLLUTION

The ocean is the end-point of most land-based pollutants entering California's coastal watersheds. Nearshore impairment of water quality can result from discharges of industrial waste, dredge spoils, agricultural and urban runoff, and municipal sewer discharges. Although the degree of impairment has been reduced in recent years, increases in population and development offer a constant challenge to those federal, state, and local agencies responsible for water quality control. As California's coastal population continues to increase, the number and volume of discharges from point and non-point sources concomitantly increases. The protection of coastal waters requires water quality managers to address a range of human activities that generate pollution and degrade coastal habitat. Management that is ecosystem-based and that considers entire watersheds will address many of the difficult tasks associated with improving coastal water quality. Interagency groups, including the Non-Point Source Interagency Coordinating Committee and the Critical Coastal Area Committee, are currently working on coordination between state agency and watershed groups, private property owners, and the research community. These efforts are sorely needed and should be supported. In addition to coordination among agencies and stakeholders, incentives and enforcement techniques are needed to ensure progress.

IMPROVE COASTAL WATER QUALITY

1. **Support new technologies for storm water recovery.**

2. **Establish Special Protections for all Areas of Special Biological Significance to reduce, or limit by special conditions, point and non-point source pollution discharges.**

    - Promote source control with cities, counties, and districts through improved public information
    - Implement best management practices for urban runoff.

3. Establish sediment quality objectives to protect benthic communities, wildlife, and human health for all bays and estuaries.

4. Reduce or eliminate point source pollution from vessels.

- Work with the US EPA to implement a prohibition on sewage and sewage sludge disposal from ocean going ships and large passenger vessels (> 300 gross registered tons) in state marine waters, and work with NOAA to impose this same ban within California's four national marine sanctuaries.

5. Increase detection and enforcement of Clean Water Act and Porter Cologne Act violations.

- Determine optimum level of enforcement staff at State and Regional Water Boards and reach these levels by development of new funding sources and deposit of fees and fines into dedicated programmatic fund.
- Develop methods to remotely monitor and track sources of watershed and ocean pollution.

REDUCE COASTAL AND MARINE DEBRIS

6. Reduce trash and debris on coastal beaches.

- Promote and expand the adopt-a-beach program and yearly coastal cleanup days.
- Provide funding for source management fixes, such as debris booms, storm drain inserts, and public education.

7. Determine sources of plastic debris in the ocean and impacts to ocean ecosystems.

- Conduct studies of sources, fate, and impacts of plastic debris.
- Develop policy recommendations on source controls.
- Support public education and awareness of the impacts of marine debris.
- Support implementation the 2006 California Marine Debris Action Plan, including the creation of a state Interagency Task Force on Litter and Marine Debris.

C. BEACHES AND COASTAL ACCESS

California’s beaches and coastal areas are a defining characteristic of California and extremely important to the state’s residents. They are also one of the main reasons why millions of tourists visit our state every year, helping to support a thriving coastal economy and over 400,000 coastal tourism-related jobs. It is essential to protect these resources and maintain access to recreation opportunities. Yet, pollution and debris can

degrade these resources and peoples' ability to enjoy coastal activities. Further, coastal development can sometimes decrease citizens' access to these areas, and other decisions—sometimes far upstream—can affect the sand needed to maintain beaches. Sound development decisions, pollution reduction, and maintenance of physical processes are needed.

PROMOTE HEALTHY BEACHES, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND COASTAL ACCESS

1. **Maintain beaches for public recreation and to reduce loss of public infrastructure.**

    - Complete the Sediment Master Plan by June 2007.
    - Promote opportunistic reuse of sediments retrieved from projects in the coastal zone.
    - Remove dams and other blockages to restore natural flows of sediment.
    - Research alternative sources of beach nourishment materials including sediments with lower sand content from wetland restoration and other environmental enhancement projects.
    - Identify watershed and offshore sand sources than can be exploited with minimal environmental impacts.

2. **Increase public access to and along the shoreline.**

    - Acquire, construct, or install signs for greater than 100 miles of the California Coastal Trail and greater than 50 miles of the San Francisco Bay Trail.
    - Complete San Francisco Bay Area Water Trail Plan by January 2008, develop public outreach materials on the Water Trail, and begin construction of associated infrastructure.
    - Investigate options for water trails in other coastal locations.
    - Open not less than 25 new public accessways to the shoreline.
    - Construct three or more interpretive or conservation centers associated with the coast, ocean, or watersheds.
    - Construct or retrofit 25 accessways to the shoreline for the mobility impaired.

D. ECONOMIC USES OF THE OCEAN

California's ocean economy was nearly $43 billion in 2000, supporting more than 700,000 jobs, according to California's Ocean Economy report. Tourism was the largest sector with transportation (shipping, ports, etc.) a close second. Construction, fishing, oil and mineral extraction, and ship and boat building are also significant contributors to the coastal and ocean economy. These activities will continue to expand California's economy if care is taken to ensure sustainability and protection of the coast and ocean's scenic beauty and biodiversity. Many existing uses could be managed better to protect fragile habitats and species that exist within the same ecosystem. Further, new

opportunities should be fostered in a precautionary manner, predicting possible impacts and finding ways to monitor potential harmful results. Judicious investments in new technologies and infrastructure will also help to ensure a strong and growing coastal economy while protecting the environmental resources on which much of it depends.

PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC USES

1. Create statewide policy positions on emerging uses, such as desalination, liquefied natural gas terminals, and aquaculture, that will minimize adverse environmental impacts of these industries.

2. Support appropriate policies on existing coastal industries, such as evaluating ways to reduce the impacts of once through cooling for coastal power plants.

3. Upgrade commercial fishing harbors to ensure viability of this industry.

4. Restore urban waterfronts for trade and tourism.

- Develop port and harbor infrastructure and diversify their functions, e.g. fishing, research, tourism, and public access.
- Assist ports by developing innovative and beneficial disposal of dredge materials.
- Promote exhibits, festivals, displays, museums, and educational centers interpreting natural, maritime, and military history associated with the California coast and ocean.